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May 10, 2008

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WORKING MOMS SPEAK OUT FOR PAID SICK DAYS

L.A. City Council Passes Resolution Supporting California Paid Sick Days Law

Los Angeles – On Mother's Day weekend, workers, worker's rights and health leaders in Los Angeles gathered at a downtown community forum to speak out and demonstrate support for the landmark Healthy Families, Healthy Workplaces bill (AB 2716), which would allow all California workers to earn paid sick days. Working mothers shared stories about the difficulties they face when they or their children get sick, and urged lawmakers to take action. Without paid sick days, they are just a few of the millions of working mothers in Los Angeles and across the state who must either forfeit wages, or go to work sick or send sick children to school or day care.

The event was scheduled just a day after the Los Angeles City Council passed a resolution to support AB 2716 by a vote of nine to one. It was introduced last week by City Councilmember Richard Alarcón (7th District). "The lack of paid sick days harms the health and well-being of our children, families and communities," Alarcón said. "No one should have to risk their job to take care of their own or a family member's health. I introduced this Resolution in support of the bill because it will benefit thousands of low-income workers, especially low-income women and working mothers, in the city of Los Angeles."

The Council resolution and community forum coincided with the release of a new study by the UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education which shows that AB 2716 is likely to have a positive impact on public health. The report is available at <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu>.

Authored by Assemblywoman Fiona Ma (D-San Francisco), the paid sick days legislation would make California the first state to require employers to provide all workers with paid sick days. "Families, especially single mothers, have a hard time making ends meet as is," Assemblywoman Ma said. "Working moms should not have to worry about losing a day's pay or, in some instances, their jobs when they or their child become ill."

"I have worked at the same fast food restaurant for more than 15 years, with no paid sick days and only a week of paid vacation," said ACORN member Manuela Mendez. "Even though my husband and I both work, we have been struggling to pay our mortgage and

all of our bills each month. I cannot afford to take time off work when I get sick, so I have to work sick for several days each year."

More than two in five California workers have no paid sick days. Going to work sick creates unhealthy workplaces and puts co-workers and customers at risk – but many workers have no choice. AB 2716 would let workers earn paid sick days that they can use to recover from illness, care for a sick family member, or recover from domestic violence or sexual assault.

Paid sick days are a pressing public health issue. Liz Torres, Chief Executive Director of Worksite Wellness LA, points out that “WWLA goes into the worksite to provide information on essential preventive screenings and health care services for low-income workers including working mothers. Unfortunately, we have found that workers are not able to make or keep preventive care appointments because they do not have paid sick days. This legislation is particularly important for female low wage workers who are primary caregivers but cannot take time off to care for their family or much less for themselves”.

AB 2716 was approved by the Assembly Labor and Employment and Judiciary committees and is currently before the Assembly Appropriations Committee. The bill is sponsored by the California Labor Federation and California ACORN, and has the support of the California Work and Family Coalition as well as more than 50 organizations statewide.

San Francisco adopted paid sick days in 2006, and the District of Columbia is about to follow. Paid sick days legislation is pending in Massachusetts and Ohio. For more information, visit www.paid sick days CA.org.

*California Labor Federation • Office of Assemblywoman Fiona Ma • California ACORN
• Labor Project for Working Families • Young Workers United • 9to5, National
Association of Working Women- Los Angeles and Bay Area Chapters • California Nurses
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